



# COMMUNITY RESOURCES AGENCY

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Director

Administration - Building - County Surveyor - Engineering - Environmental Health - Fleet Services - GIS - Housing - Planning - Roads - Solid Waste

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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DATE: August 12, 2015  
TO: Responsible Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations  
FROM: Adam Paszkowski, Senior Planner  
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

The County of Tuolumne will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):

**Project Title:** Tuolumne County General Plan Update

**Project Proponent:** Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors  
2 South Green Street  
Sonora, CA 95370

We are soliciting your comments to assist us in identifying the potential environmental impacts that may result from the proposed project to ensure that the EIR addresses all relevant environmental issues. Responsible agencies are required to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering the issuance of permits or other approvals for the project.

The project description, location and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and have been posted on the County's website at [www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/generalplanupdate](http://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/generalplanupdate).

An Initial Study has not been prepared for these projects pursuant to Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Please send your written comments to Adam Paszkowski at the Tuolumne County Resources Agency, 2 South Green Street, Sonora, CA 95370 at the earliest possible date but not later than **September 11, 2015**. Please provide the name of a contact person for your agency with your comments.

Date: August 12, 2015

Signature: 

Name: Adam Paszkowski

Title: Senior Planner

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E-mail: apaszkowski@tuolumne.ca.us

## **EXHIBIT A: PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is the preparation of a comprehensive update of the County's 1996 General Plan. California law requires cities and counties to adopt a General Plan to guide future development. The General Plan is the foundation upon which all land use decisions are to be based. The Draft Tuolumne County General Plan accommodates population growth in the County through the year 2040. The Draft General Plan includes the following Elements:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Noise
- Public Facilities
- Cultural Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Community Identity
- Columbia Community Plan
- Tuolumne Community Plan
- Water Resources
- Circulation
- Natural Resources
- Safety
- Recreation
- Economic Development
- Air Quality
- Jamestown Community Plan
- East Sonora Community Plan
- Mountain Springs Community Plan
- Healthy Communities

The Draft General Plan is available on the Community Resources Agency website at [www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/generalplanupdate](http://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/generalplanupdate).

**LOCATION:** Tuolumne County is located in the center of the California Mother Lode along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The County is bordered on the north by Calaveras County, on the south by Mariposa County, on the west by Stanislaus County, and on the east by Alpine and Mono Counties. Sonora, the County Seat, is the only incorporated city in Tuolumne County.

## **EXHIBIT B: GENERAL PLAN PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

**Aesthetics.** The EIR will identify regionally significant aesthetic and scenic resources, and describe the potential effects of implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan on existing viewsheds, scenic vistas, and scenic highways. It will describe the changes in visual character associated with land use designations contemplated in the Tuolumne County General Plan. It will also provide an assessment of lighting/glare impacts, and impacts to the dark sky character of rural communities.

**Agriculture/Forestry.** The EIR will identify all prime agricultural lands, timber lands and productive farmlands in the unincorporated county based on the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), and existing County data. The EIR will also evaluate the potential of implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan to convert agricultural and timber land to other uses, and identify any direct or indirect impacts on agricultural and timber lands and/or conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural or timber use or Williamson Act contract lands within the planning area. The EIR will also address the potential of implementing the proposed changes to the County's Williamson Act Contract and Title 17 of the Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, related to agricultural, residential estate and timber zoning districts, and identify any direct or indirect impacts on agricultural and timber lands and/or conflicts related to the proposed changes to facilitate agritourism and other agricultural uses.

**Air Quality.** The EIR will describe regional and local ambient air quality standards and trends in the project vicinity. Programmatically, the EIR will evaluate the potentially significant air quality effects of implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan, including long-term operations of proposed land uses. The EIR will also evaluate the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan with respect to air emissions, potential to contribute to air quality violations, potential to expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, potential sources of odor, and effects on climate change. Additional information on impacts to climate change will be discussed in a separate EIR section.

**Biological Resources.** The EIR will identify important biological resources, including critical and important habitat areas and species of concern based on existing County and State regional mapping data. The EIR will evaluate the impacts in terms of the potential of implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan to result in adverse effects to sensitive habitats or species listed as endangered, threatened, rare, sensitive, candidate, or special status species in a local or regional plan, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The EIR will also consider potential effects to federally-protected wetlands, oak woodlands, the movement of resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or wildlife corridors, and potential conflict with the provisions of adopted or other approved local or regional plans, policies, or ordinances.

**Cultural Resources.** The EIR will review areas that contain known, significant cultural resources, including archaeological and paleontological resources. The EIR will evaluate, on a regional level, whether implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would cause a change in the significance of historical or archeological resources, disturb human remains, or destroy unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features.

**Geology, Soils and Mineral Resources.** The EIR will summarize the geologic and mineral resources setting, including the regional soil types and conditions, major faults, seismicity, and geologic formations in the unincorporated portions of the County based on existing County, regional, and State data, including information from the California Division of Mines and Geology. The EIR will evaluate implementation of the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan in terms of its potential to expose people or future populations and/or structures to the risk of loss, injury, or death involving the rupture of a known earthquake fault, seismic-related ground failure, substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil, and unstable geologic conditions that could result in landslides, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction,

or collapse. The EIR will also evaluate potential effects to the availability and use of mineral resources within the planning area.

**Global Climate Change.** The EIR will evaluate the potential of implementing the Tuolumne County Regional Blueprint Greenhouse Gas Study produced by Rincon Consultants, Inc. As such, the EIR will address implementation of the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan in terms of its potential to contribute to GHG emissions and global climate change effects.

**Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** The EIR will identify hazards and hazardous materials associated with implementation of the Tuolumne County General Plan. Hazardous materials and waste are often used, stored, and transported within the County, and historic agricultural, mining, and industrial land uses may have left residues of such materials in the soil and groundwater that may pose a threat to sensitive receptors and public health. Impacts associated with fire hazards and airport safety hazards will also be evaluated. Specifically, the EIR will analyze impacts related to the sources of hazardous materials within the unincorporated portions of the County.

**Hydrology and Water Resources.** The EIR will identify County-mapped hydrologic features and water resources including hydrologic basins, floodplain boundaries, surface waters, groundwater resources, dam inundation zones, and areas prone to inundation by seiche or mudflows. The EIR will analyze whether implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would alter existing drainage patterns, contribute to runoff which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems, or place housing or other structures within flood hazard areas. The EIR will determine if implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would expose people or future populations to a significant risk involving flooding. The EIR will also determine the impacts on a regional level to surface and groundwater quality based on waste discharge requirements, Clean Water Act regulations (e.g. Section 303(d)), and other applicable water quality objectives. Finally, the EIR will analyze whether implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would substantially deplete groundwater supplies and interfere with groundwater recharge resulting in a net deficit in groundwater volume or a lowering of the local groundwater level.

**Land Use and Planning.** The EIR will discuss any substantive differences between the proposed and existing County General Plan and other applicable land use plans, ordinances, policies, and regulations including, but not limited to, Community Plans, and various other regional plans, including airport land use plans. The EIR will determine whether implementing the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would result in any physical division of established communities, and identify the potential for land use conflicts resulting from the proposed land use patterns.

**Noise.** Long-term noise impacts may result from the increased number of vehicles associated with the designation of certain lands to higher land use intensities. Short-term noise impacts could result from the construction impacts, and impacts could be exacerbated by higher-density development projects. The addition of commercial and industrial designated land uses could also impact noise levels in the County. The noise analysis in the EIR will review the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan for consistency with the most recent State guidelines for General Plans. Noise modeling for transportation-generated noise will be performed for various roadway segments, based on updated traffic data. Noise impacts from stationary sources will be evaluated. The EIR will also evaluate the proximity of sensitive land uses to excessive noise levels and what impacts may result from the adoption of slightly higher noise levels in specific zones compared to what is allowed under the existing General Plan standards.

**Population and Housing.** The EIR will evaluate population and housing impacts. Although the Tuolumne County Housing Element was updated and adopted in 2014 as part of a separate project, the EIR will describe the anticipated population, employment, and housing effects of the project. It will also assess on a regional level the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan's environmental effects due to changes in population and housing conditions, the potential to displace housing that may cause

housing or people to be moved elsewhere, and whether the plan satisfies the County's fair share of allocated housing types.

**Public Services.** The EIR will identify types of governmental facilities and services that serve the unincorporated portion of the County (e.g., police, fire, schools, parks). The EIR will discuss the regional location and types of governmental facilities and service improvements that may be required to meet future demand due to the implementation of the Tuolumne County General Plan.

**Recreation.** The proposed Tuolumne County General Plan would provide services for a greater residential population than under the existing General Plan, placing increased demands on public parks and open space lands. The EIR will analyze the conversion of existing open space lands in the County to urban uses based on the proposed land use plan. The EIR will also evaluate the potential loss of recreational resources.

**Transportation/Circulation.** Implementation of the Tuolumne County General Plan would result in increased vehicular use of State highways, rural roadways and urban streets throughout the County. This increased use may adversely impact the level of service on these routes. The EIR will analyze the effects of the proposed land uses on the County's regional transportation network. The analysis will compare the potential impacts associated with the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan and alternatives to the existing baseline conditions, and the "no project" condition scenario for roadway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, aviation, and rail systems.

**Utilities and Service Systems.** Increases in land use intensity or the designation of land uses pursuant to the proposed Tuolumne County General Plan may create demand for additional utilities and services beyond the capacity of current systems. The analysis of utilities and service systems will examine utility-related plans to determine if sufficient and adequate capacity is available, and if not, if future utility infrastructure is planned. The EIR will review water supply systems, wastewater treatment capacity, solid waste disposal, electrical supply, and other related wet and dry utilities.